A Community-Based Vision Plan for the

Upper Monroe Neighborhood

Produced by the
Rochester Regional
Community Design Center

R R C D C

ROCHESTER REGIONAL COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER

A Community-Based Vision Plan for the Upper Monroe Neighborhood

July 2005

Produced by the Rochester Regional Community Design Center

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The Design Center

R R C D C

ROCHESTER REGIONAL COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER

The non-profit Rochester Regional Community Design Center (RRCDC) serves as a resource base for activities focused on design of the built environment in the nine-county Greater Rochester Region. The organization is a group of volunteer design professionals and interested citizens working to translate principles of good community design into vision plans for our neighborhoods, and seeking to help reestablish relationships between our citizens and their physical environments. We act as a multifaceted resource center, educating communities about design, engaging citizens in community-based planning, and advocating for people-centric design of our public spaces, while working in co-operation with both the private and public sectors in the urban, suburban and rural areas of this region.

One of our most effective means of civic engagement is the community design charrette, an intensive, participatory planning process that brings together a variety of community stakeholders to observe and share ideas about their community. Together they produce tangible steps towards achieving neighborhood consensus for a community vision. As facilitator, we work with a Steering Committee of neighborhood representatives to plan the charrette, provide design professionals at the event to help translate citizens' ideas into physical drawings, and follow through with those initial ideas to create a final set of plans and recommendations for the community.

Since we began our work as the AIA Rochester Urban Design Committee (UDC) in 1998, the group has facilitated sixteen community design charrettes, including the Center City Charrette that resulted in a community-based vision for Rochester's downtown, and the University Avenue Charrette that resulted in construction of the award-winning ARTWalk project. In 2004, we officially incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and continue to serve our region as we seek to grow, ourselves.

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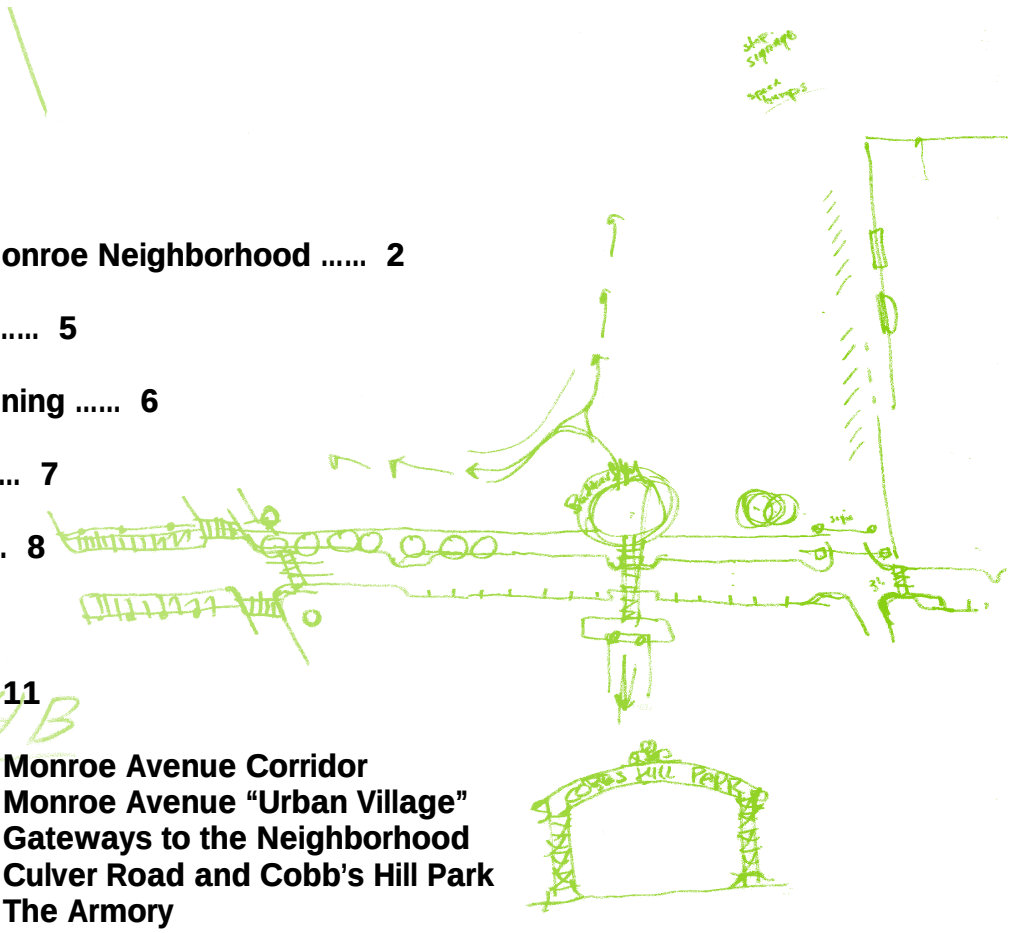

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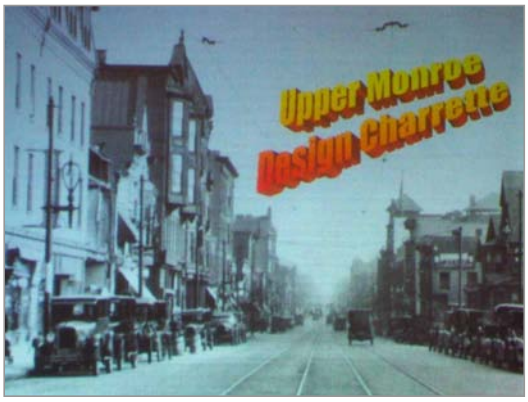
Introduction



On October 16, 2004, nearly one hundred community members from the Upper Monroe Neighborhood gathered to share ideas and create a vision for the future of their community. They wanted to make the neighborhood better for the people who live and work there on a daily basis. The process was led by the Upper Monroe Steering Committee and guided by the RRCDC as the two groups worked together to coordinate the charrette and synthesize its outcomes into tangible development strategies. Now, less than a year after the charrette occurred, a final, physical plan for the area is complete and the neighborhood is poised to move beyond visioning stages and into realization of a healthier, better-designed and more viable community.

This report chronicles the process before and after the charrette, and documents the vision generated by the community. The following pages explore the historic and physical setting of the Upper Monroe Neighborhood, present the community's vision for the future as voiced by citizens, residents, merchants and other stakeholders, and describe the physical plan and professional recommendations for the neighborhood based on synthesis of ideas from the charrette and principles of good urban design.

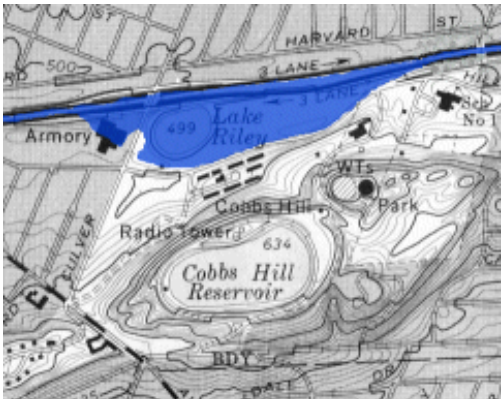
The "Charrette Planning and Coordination" section of the report describes the community's process of planning for the charrette, from the first conversation between people who work in the neighborhood to the event itself, held a year later. The "History of the Neighborhood" section puts the areas into historic context, while the "Description of Neighborhood" discusses the current character of the area and places it in relation to the surrounding city. Sections about the "Charrette Area" and "Focus Group Areas" provide physical specifications about the areas studied at the charrette, and "Highlights of the Charrette" gives a sense of the event itself. Finally, the last three sections indicate how the ideas from the charrette ("Charrette Results") were synthesized by the RRCDC's Design Studio, with guidance from the Upper Monroe Steering Committee and community. The results were translated into actual plans and recommendations for implementation ("Post-Charrette Work, Phase I," "Recommendations").

RRCDC staff compiled the report during a several-week period in July of 2005; it is the first booklet of its kind produced by the organization. It is intended as a resource for citizens and communities interested in learning about how a charrette process can help them achieve a more inclusive process of neighborhood development, a historic record of the Upper Monroe economic revitalization process, an example of work completed by the RRCDC, and an affirmation of the possible.

The Neighborhood History

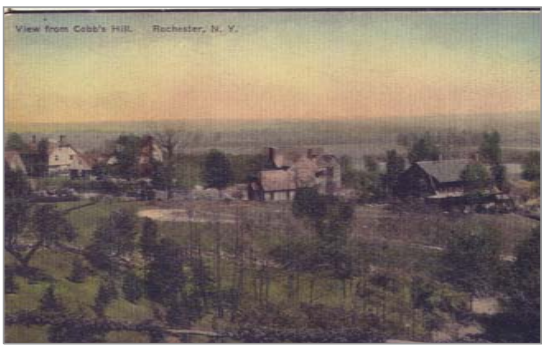
Monroe Avenue evolved as the city of Rochester moved outward to the south, toward Pittsford. It was considered the largest travel route prior to the Erie Canal, as the line of least resistance for horse carts. The area was literally carved out to create a road between the city's two highest peaks – Pinnacle and Cobb's Hills.

Rochester originally built its reputation as the Flour City, center of the grain-producing industry with mills naturally driven by the power of the Genesee River and Falls. Before the Erie Canal opened, Rochester already had sixty sailing crafts and two steamers working at the upper end of the Genesee, allowing plenty of trade with Canada in the early 1800s. Full opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 reduced the cost of transport and increased the marketability of bulk products. This spurred an annual sale of 500,000 barrels of flour from 1834 to 1854.



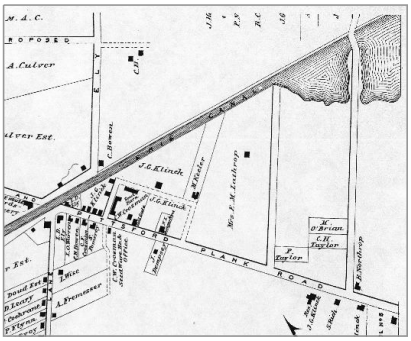
Widewaters, literally a widened portion of the Canal where boats turned around, was located just north of what is now Cobb's Hill park. It formed when the canal routes were straightened. This naturally created commercial venues for boat manufacturers and craftsmen along the shorelines. Eastern Widewaters, now known as Lake Riley at Cobb's Hill Park, was bordered by saw mills in 1888 and the Eldridge Engine Co. in 1910.

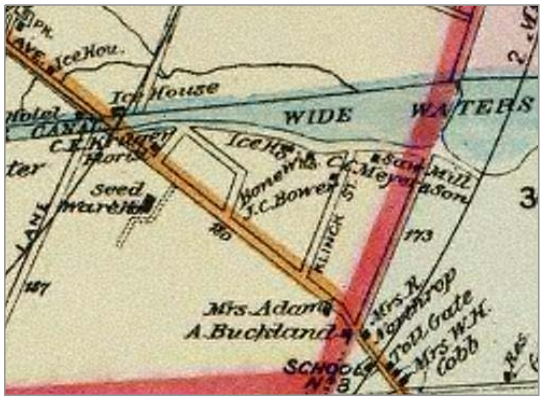
History of Upper Monroe



During the 1850s, nursery businesses began emerging around the city. The fertile land and cool air from the lake made Rochester an ideal area for the nursery industry, and the easy access to the canal provided speed for the market, which in effect kept trees alive and seeds fresh during transportation. In fact, by the 1850s Rochester became reputed enough to be renamed the Flower City. In 1856 there were more fruit trees sold from Monroe County than the rest of the country. George Ellwanger and Patrick Berry purchased the majority of the land around Cobb's Hill, originally owned by Gideon Cobb, the owner of an ax and scythe factory. Ellwanger and Berry were partners in creating the Mt. Hope Nurseries in 1840.

The Crosman Terrace Historic District, located along the center of Crosman Terrace in the Upper Monroe Neighborhood, is on land formerly owned by the Crosman Seed Company, once the largest seed and plant company in the world. The Crosman brothers, Charles W. and George F., took over the company in 1865 when their father died and successfully came to claim over 1,200 acres of land throughout Rochester in 1890. In 1919, the Erie Canal was re-routed south of the city of Rochester to allow for construction of the subway project the company was sold and relocated to East Rochester by 1924. However, Crosman Seed Company still remains as the oldest seed company in America and the historic Crosman Seed Company Building still stands at the corner of Laburnum Crescent and Monroe Avenue.





As the horticultural market steadily declined, nursery properties were divided into housing plots, and the craftsmen that had emerged along with the opening of the canal began to transform Rochester into an industrial city. Much of the Crosmans' land was subdivided by 1900, although due to some inconveniences related to the development of the trolley system at the time, homes did not begin appearing until nearly a decade later.

Next to Lake Riley at the site of Eastern Widewaters stands the abandoned Calvary Armory on Culver Road. It was constructed in 1916 to keep up with the expanding cavalry troops of Rochester, and once was a magnificent facility packed with stable and forage rooms for over 150 horses. The Armory included an indoor shooting range, outdoor drill grounds for troops, and even a horse show arena and even spectator's stands.

The Cobb's Hill/Highland district, originally split into housing plots in 1906 by Ellwanger and Barry Realty, features many homes that were built in the 1920s and 30s. The neighborhood has not had any significant changes in its residential areas since the early 1900s, but there has been a steady development of commercial activity, especially near I-490, that continues into the present.

The Neighborhood

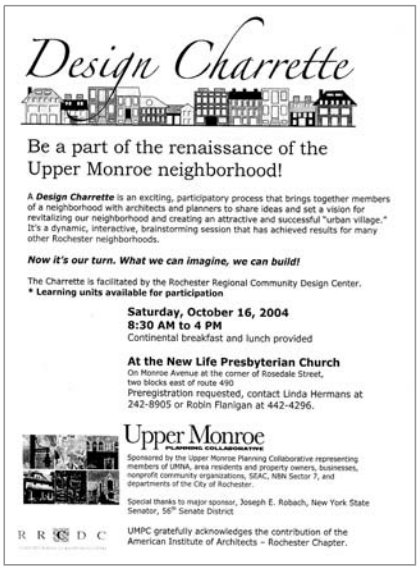
Upper Monroe today

The Upper Monroe neighborhood is located in the southeast quadrant of the city of Rochester. Monroe Avenue itself is an important corridor which extends from Downtown Rochester, southeast through Brighton, to the suburb of Pittsford and beyond. The Upper Monroe neighborhood serves as a gateway into the city from those suburbs. It consists of Monroe Avenue and the surrounding, mostly residential cross-streets along a portion of the corridor that begins at the crossing of Route 490 and culminates at the City's border with the Town of Brighton at Highland Avenue. As it exits the city, Monroe Avenue rises in a continuous long hill which crests near Cobbs Hill Park and extends between the city's two highest peaks, Pinnacle Hill and Cobb's Hill, then descends into Brigh-

The Upper Monroe neighborhood is largely residential, and includes the historic Crosman residential block. It also contains several small-scale commercial and mixed use enclaves along the Monroe Corridor as well as Cobb's Hill Park to the east. Much of the neighborhood is viable and healthy, but there are pockets of physical deterioration, neglect and social problems including poverty, drug use, and loitering which prompted the charrette as one component of revitalization efforts.

The neighborhood contains several active community organizations. The Corner Place is dedicated to building bridges between neighbors in the area, and is largely supported by the New Life Presbyterian Church. The Church has a large presence in the local community and recently established an outreach team looking at economic development in the city. The Upper Monroe Neighborhood Association, Hillside Children's Center and the Temple Beth Shalom are also involved in coordinating various types of community activities in the neighborhood.

Coordination and Planning



Design Charrette

Be a part of the renaissance of the Upper Monroe neighborhood!

A ***Design Charrette*** is an exciting, participatory process that brings together members of a neighborhood with architects and planners to share ideas and set a vision for revitalizing our neighborhood and creating an attractive and successful "urban village." It's a dynamic, interactive, brainstorming session that has achieved results for many other Rochester neighborhoods.

Now it's our turn. What we can imagine, we can build!

The Charrette is facilitated by the Rochester Regional Community Design Center.
*** Learning units available for participation**

Saturday, October 16, 2004
8:30 AM to 4 PM
Continental breakfast and lunch provided

At the New Life Presbyterian Church
On Monroe Avenue at the corner of Rosedale Street, two blocks east of route 490
Preregistration requested, contact Linda Hermans at 242-8905 or Robin Flanigan at 442-4296.

Upper Monroe
PLANNING COLLABORATIVE

Sponsored by the Upper Monroe Planning Collaborative representing members of UMNA, area residents and property owners, businesses, nonprofit community organizations, SEAC, NBN Sector 7, and departments of the City of Rochester.

Special thanks to major sponsor, Joseph E. Robach, New York State Senator, 56th Senate District

R R C D C

UMPC gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the American Institute of Architects – Rochester Chapter.

The evolution of the Upper Monroe Community Design Charrette is testament to the power of one conversation. In October of 2003, two women who worked in the neighborhood sat down to share their goals and dreams for the area and found that they held many common goals. Aware of the charrette concept, they sought to involve more people in creating a vision through a community-planning process.

Soon three local organizations – The Corner Place, The Upper Monroe Neighborhood Association, and the Third Presbyterian Church – formed the Upper Monroe Planning Collaborative (UMPC), to spearhead the process of funding and coordinating a charrette. They contacted the RRCDC, and in May of 2004, an Upper Monroe Steering Committee with the guidance of the RRCDC began the official planning process for the community design charrette held in October, 2004.

The UPMC worked collaboratively with the RRCDC on activities related to the content of the charrette. The RRCDC gave the Steering Committee small assignments to help them become more familiar with the physical qualities of the neighborhood and think of the community in new ways. Through these activities, the Steering Committee was able to determine the boundaries of the charrette area, to select specific focus areas for study groups, and to really focus their critiques about the current neighborhood condition and their desires for revitalization.

Throughout the planning process, the UMPC faced numerous challenges. One was to engage a broader cross-section of the community, including those without a history of community involvement. Seventy percent of the residents in the neighborhood are renters. The UPMC struggled to gain participation from less permanent residents and off-site landlords, but met with only tepid success. Engaging these community members remains a goal even in the post-charrette phases.

The UPMC also struggled to recognize their own capabilities. They worked together on activities that helped to explore the group's potential. A fundraising dinner at Le Lemon Grass, a neighborhood restaurant, netted a profit of $1,500 in one night and helped ease skepticism about the group's ability to fund and achieve their ambitions.

In one year, what began as two people's desire to improve physical conditions of their neighborhood evolved into a broader goal of engaging many members of the community to

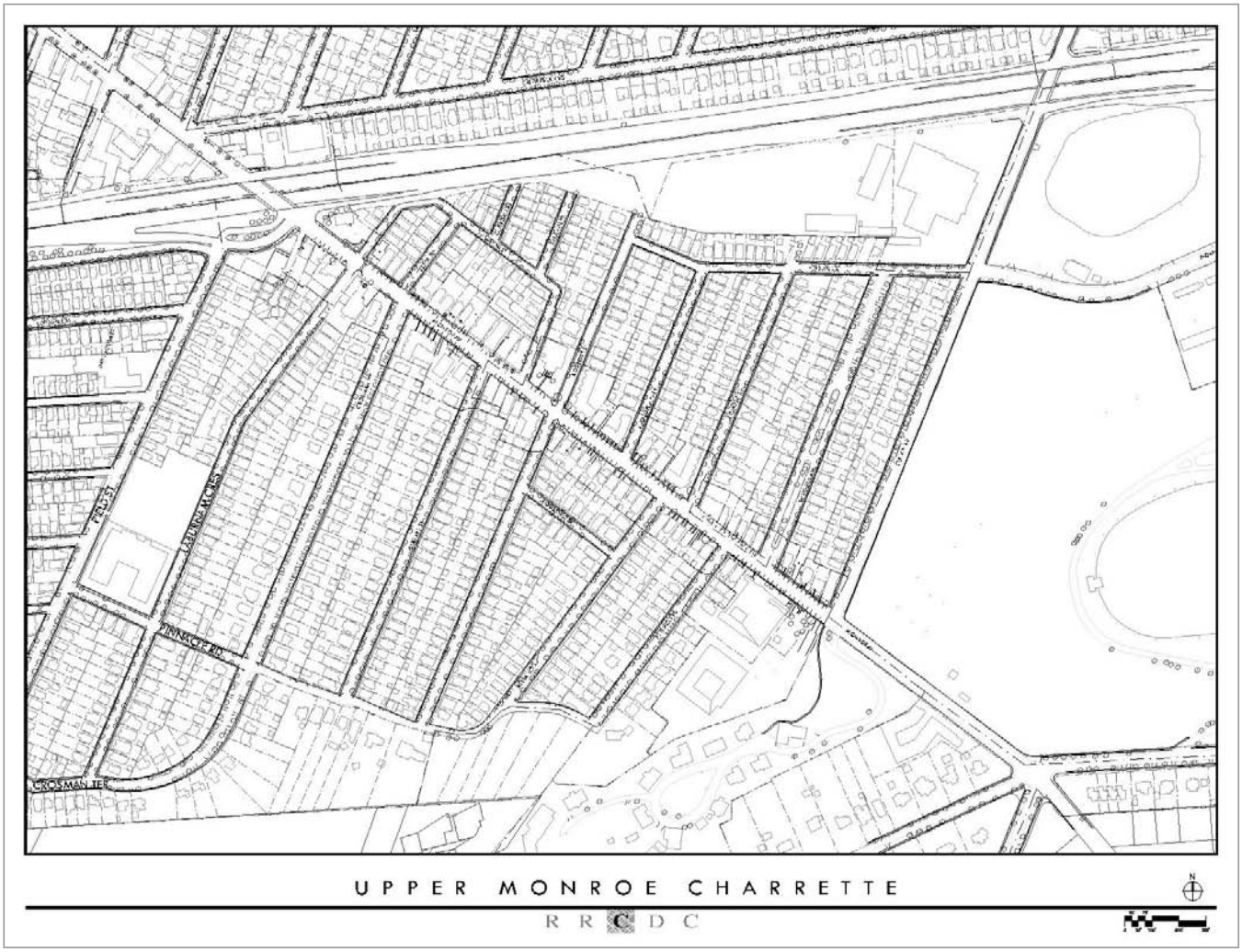
The Charrette Event

On Saturday, October 16, 2004, nearly a hundred community members gathered at the New Life Presbyterian Church on Monroe Avenue for the charrette. The energy in the room was high and as the day proceeded it was clear to the organizers that participants were really invested in the process.

In the morning, after listening to introductions from the organizers and Mayor, a brief history of the area from a local historian, Larry Naukam, and a crash course in urban planning from the RRCDC, participants began to get actively engaged in the charrette process. They walked to their study sites to become familiar with the areas and began identifying what they liked about each area and what they wanted to change. The first half of the afternoon was spent at the drawing table, where participants worked with volunteer design professionals to record their ideas in ink on large base maps and easel pads. The afternoon culminated with presentations from each study group to the entire charrette crowd.

Looking back at the event, a member of the Steering Committee commented that the similarity and overlap of suggestions from groups who had worked independently of one another was both surprising and pleasing. In fact, some suggestions, such as adding a pedestrian bridge over the highway to connect with an adjacent neighborhood, were so popular that they inspired applause from the whole room. The event itself proved a success in multiple ways, including not only the quality of ideas generated but also the level of engagement of residents and other community members. Maintaining this engagement and momentum is now an important challenge in the post-charrette phases.

The Charrette Area



The specific area studied during a charrette event is generally referred to as the "charrette area." For Upper Monroe, the area consists of a triangular section of the Upper Monroe Neighborhood bound by Route 490 to the north, Monroe Avenue on the southwest, and Culver Road and the contiguous portion of Cobb's Hill Park to the east. The three points of the triangle formed by the intersecting roadways constitute the major gateways leading into the area (left).

The Charrette Area

Approximately eight residential blocks run parallel to Culver Road within the charrette area. These blocks contain about 260 residences and small commercial buildings (left) as well as several community spaces. Another 30 houses and small commercial buildings line the Monroe corridor on the south. Several historic buildings and areas, including the original Crosman Seed Company building (below, left) and Crosman Terrace, eligible as a historic preservation district (below, right) are located on Monroe Avenue.

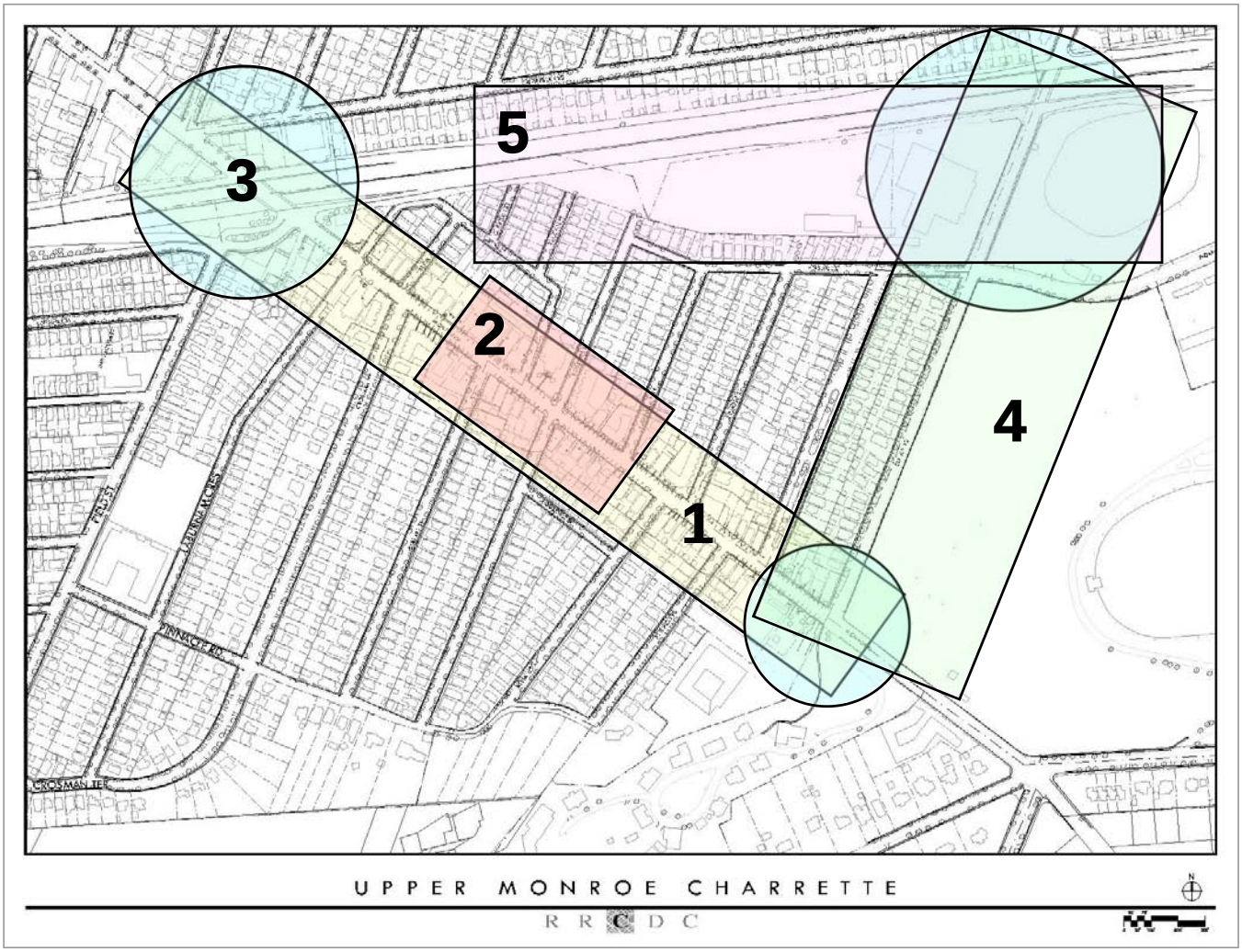
About one quarter of the charrette area, in the northern section along Route 490, consists of undeveloped green space which was formerly the horse-training area for the local cavalry. The Armory Building still exists on the site (although now unused) along with its auxiliary buildings.

The Cobb's Hill portion of the area, east of Culver Road, consists primarily of green space covering very gentle hills (left). Like many parks in the Rochester area, it was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. It contains some playing fields, picnic tables and walkways, and the small Lake Riley sits in the corner of the park between Culver Road and Route 490 (below). Cobb's Hill, itself, lies just outside the charrette boundaries to the east and is topped by an important reservoir.

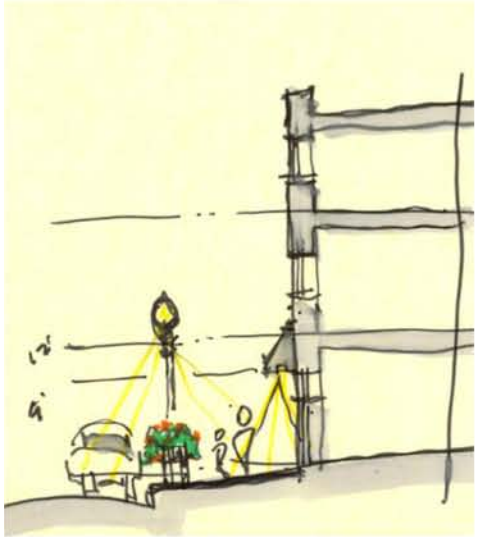
Focus Groups

Dividing the overall charrette area into smaller, more manageable sections called “study” or “focus” areas allows a higher diversity and quality of results from the charrette process. Groups of six to eight charrette participants, working with two design professionals as facilitators, study and create recommendations for specific focus areas during the charrette event. Usually two or more separate groups study the same area. The Upper Monroe Steering Committee chose focus areas based on conversations and exercises facilitated by the RRCDC which helped them think about the area from an urban design perspective. The five focus areas include:

Group 1: Upper Monroe Avenue Corridor
Group 2: Urban Village
Group 3: Gateways to the Neighborhood
Group 4: Culver Corridor to Cobb’s Hill Park
Group 5: The Armory



Guiding Principles for Neighborhood Development



A diversity of creative and thoughtful suggestions for improving the neighborhood emerged from the collaborative brainpower at the charrette. While each focus group concentrated on their own particular topic and provided unique approaches to their particular design challenges, similar themes wove together all the details and some of the same specific suggestions evolved independently in more than one group. The following pages show and compare the ideas and drawings generated by the charrette focus groups. The renderings on those pages are actual drawings produced on the day of the charrette by facilitators and participants.

General Principles for Neighborhood Design and Development

- **Neighborhood Identity** – Participants emphasized desire for a distinct and cohesive, visual aesthetic that continues throughout the area, including design of building facades, storefronts, signage, public art, and other enhancements that affect the visual quality of the neighborhood.

- **Pedestrian Friendliness** – The charrette elucidated wide support for pedestrian-oriented design of streetscapes, including wider sidewalks, traffic calming measures, more obvious crosswalks, and better street lighting.

- **New and Existing Green Space** – Participants suggested improving the quality of existing green space and adding new green space and street trees throughout the charrette area.

- **Neighborhood Connections** – People encouraged better street connections to facilitate traffic and pedestrian mobility within the charrette area, into Cobb's Hill Park, through the major gateways into the area, and between Upper Monroe and adjacent neighborhoods.

- **Strong Gateways** – The areas which serve as entrances into the neighborhood should visually mark arrival to and departure from Upper Monroe.

- **Historic Preservation** – Neighbors want to see future development that respects, preserves and highlights the neighborhood's unique history.

Development should lead to...

- **Economic Vitality** – Participants hope to see notable increases in the viability of the area's business district through business-friendly changes to the streetscape and to the area's policies towards local commercial development.

- **Increased Community Use** – Cobb's Hill Park, the nearby Armory site, and other spaces along the major corridors should be improved to encourage increased community access to and use of recreational and civic spaces throughout the area.

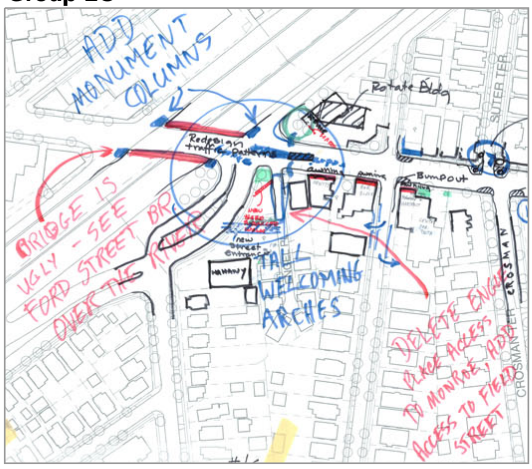
- **Safety and Security** – The neighborhood should be safe and should be perceived as such by people who live and visit the area.

Charrette Results for Focus Area 1:

This area consists of the primary corridor of concern, Monroe Avenue. Focus groups 1A, 1B and 1C studied the entire length of the "Upper" Monroe area, starting where the road crosses the Route 490 expressway and continuing southeast to the city line where Monroe crosses Highland Avenue. The main goals of this focus area were to improve continuity along the street, generate ideas for design guidelines, and to enhance pedestrianism along the street.

Group 1A

Group 1C



Define Gateways

All three groups that studied the corridor suggest defining the gateways to Upper Monroe. Group 1A (above) indicates location for potential new signage and gateway markers; Group 1C (left) suggests adding columns to delineate the crossing over 490. Both show suggestions to facilitate pedestrian movement through the major intersection.

Group 1C

Enhance Green Space

Adding additional green space and improving existing green space was mentioned in all three focus groups. The suggestion to revamp an existing green lot to create a pocket park near the Monroe/Culver intersection, for example, shows community desire for more usable green space. Focus groups also noted areas for new street trees and other landscaping additions.

Group 1A

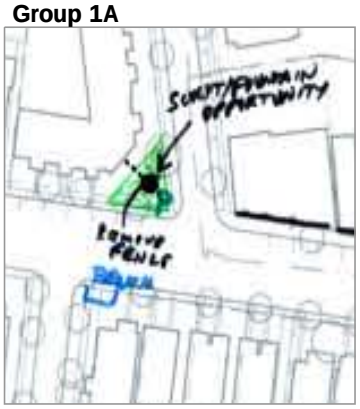
Group 1A

Improve Church Yard

All groups noted need for improvement to the New Life Church lot. Group 1A indicates (at right) specific additions of light and landscaping that would create a more usable gathering space for pedestrians, church visitors and others in the neighborhood.

Monroe Avenue Corridor

Group 1A



Group 1C

Add Public Art

Groups suggest areas for public art including murals, fountains, and sculpture gardens.

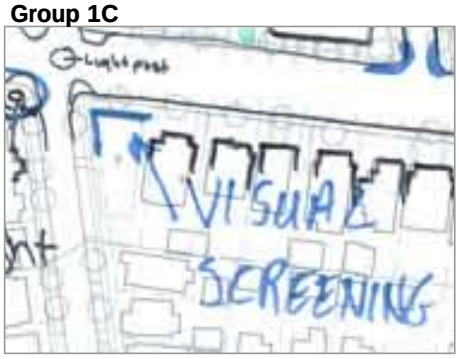
Group 1B

Pedestrian Improvements

All groups want crosswalks to be better defined with a contrasting material such as brick. Some groups also indicate possible locations for new bump-outs to help calm traffic.

Group 1C

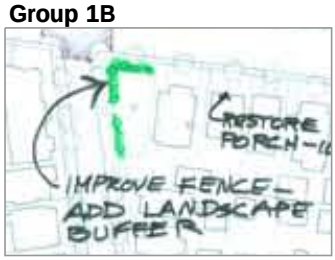
Group 1C



Screen Parking

All three suggest using fences and shrubs or other landscaping to visually screen parking lots from the street.

Group 1B



Charrette Results for Focus Area 2:

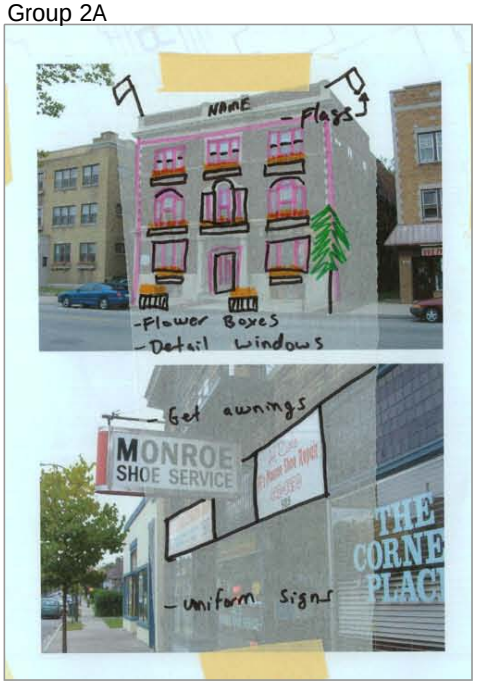
The area focuses in on the commercial node along Upper Monroe Avenue which is considered the "Village Center" of the area, located between Shepard Street and Rosedale Street. Major goals for this area included enhancing business viability, establishing a sense of arrival at the "Center," improving the area for pedestrians and discouraging loitering.

Group 2A

Add Gathering Space
The Urban Village Group shows how the Church lot could be improved to add a gathering space along the Monroe corridor.

Street Tree Density
Group 2 indicates a change in street-tree density between the more residential portions of Upper Monroe and the denser commercial area in the Urban Village. The Village area should have smaller and less dense trees, of a different variety, as shown (right).

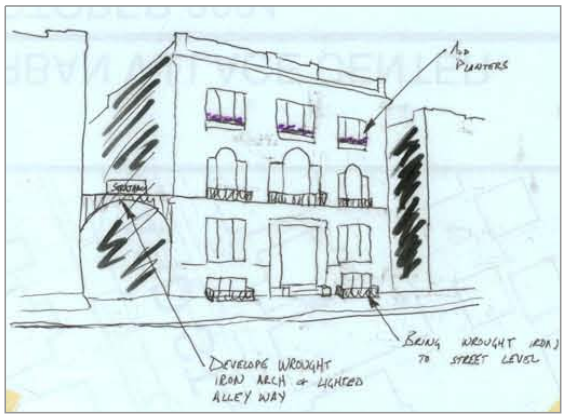
Group 2A

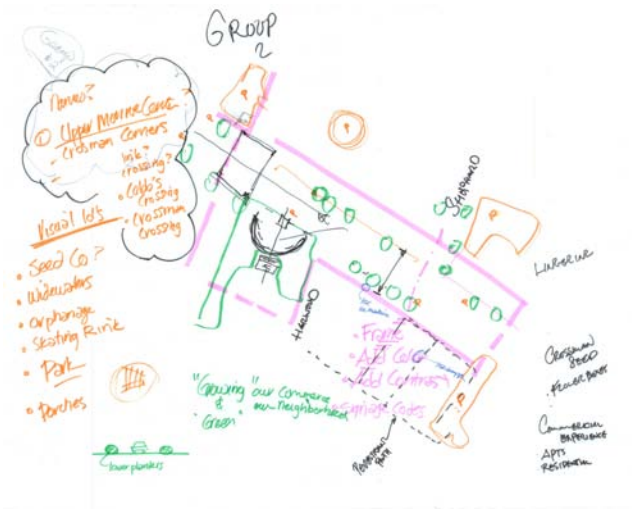


Facade Improvements
New window detail, improved signage, added arches over alleyways, renovated cornices, awnings, and other specific changes were suggested to enhance the visual quality of facades on commercial buildings in the Urban Village.

Group 2A

Group 2A



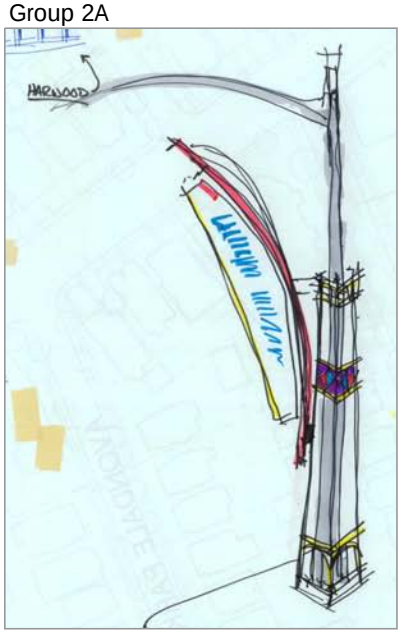


Group 2A

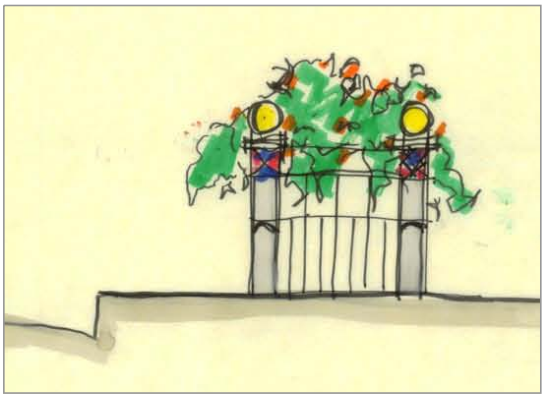
Uniform Street Theme

Group 2 shows how a street theme could help to visually tie the neighborhood together, such as wrought iron with patches of bright color for signage, lampposts, flower boxes, planters, fences, awnings and other decorative features.

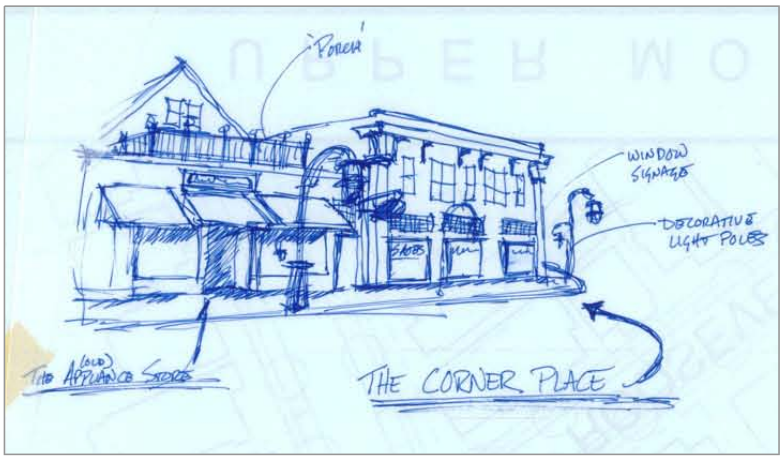
Group 2A



Group 2A



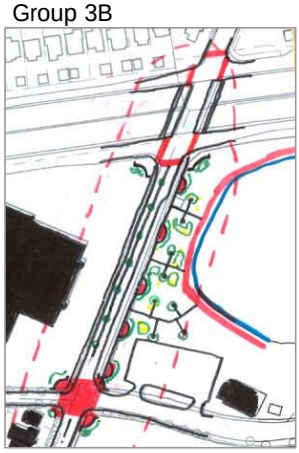
Group 2A



Charrette Results for Focus Area 3:

Three major gateways into the Upper Monroe neighborhood include the intersections of Monroe Avenue with Route 490, Monroe with Culver Road, and Culver with Route 490. Gateways are key points that announce arrival to or departure from a neighborhood. The major goals for the Upper Monroe gateways included creating a consistent "arrival" identity for the neighborhood, improving connections with other neighborhoods, and redesigning the bridge and gateways with respect to both car and pedestrian transport.

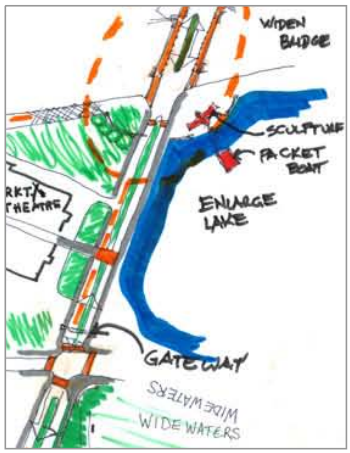
Group 3B



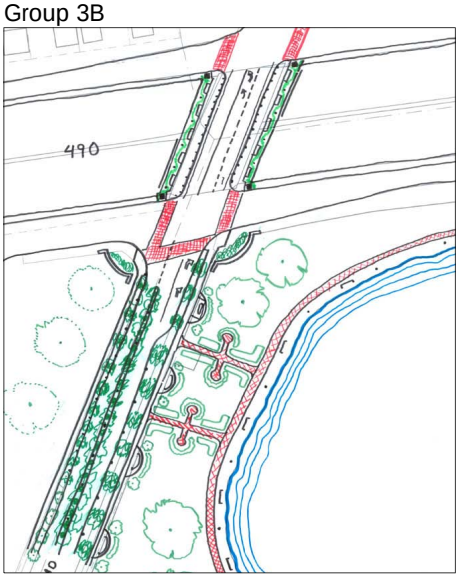
Gateway at Rte 490

The two groups show how the area surrounding the bridge over Rte 490 can be enhanced as a gateway, with features like new sculpture at Lake Riley, improved landscaping, gateway markers and changes to the bridge itself.

Group 3A



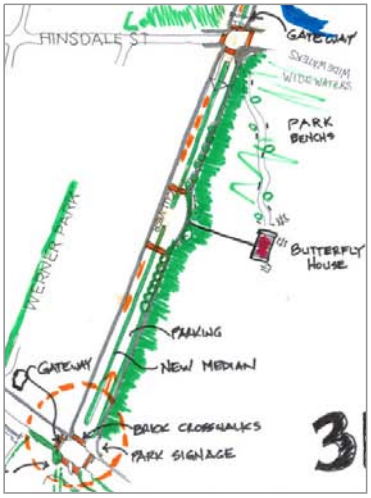
Group 3B



Lake Perimeter Trail

3B suggests creating a trail around Lake Riley and adding strong pedestrian connections from the trail to other nearby pathways such as the sidewalk along Culver Road.

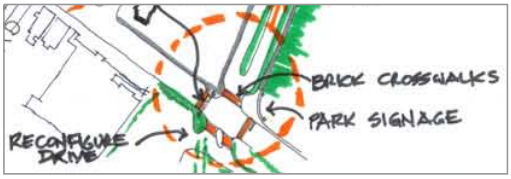
Group 3A



Enhance Cobb's Hill Park

Group 3A shows how Cobb's Hill Park can be enhanced with features like new paths and destinations that encourage use and provide a consistent identity along Culver Avenue.

Group 3A

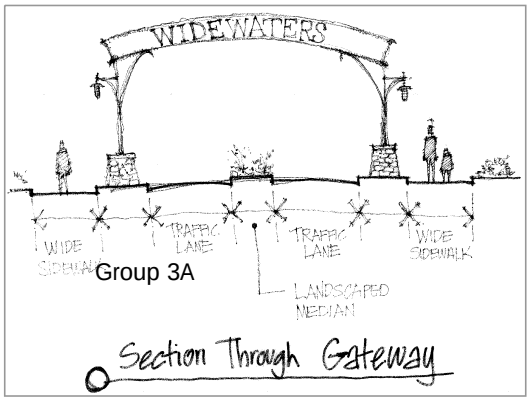


Culver/Monroe Gateway

Groups show how the gateway can be improved with new crosswalks, signage and landscaping, and show how access to parking could be reconfigured for the Hillside Children's Center and Nursing Home.

Gateways

Group 3A

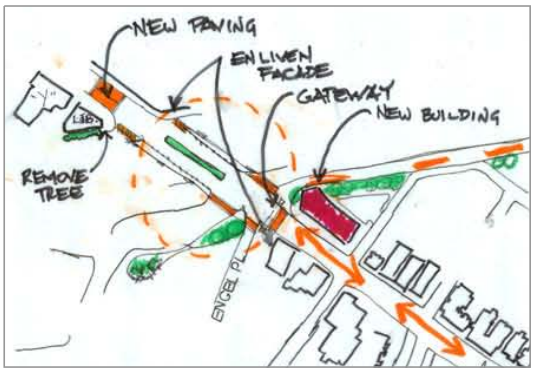


Group 3A

Gateway Markers

Group 3A suggest a possible design for wrought-iron, welcoming arches (left) for the gateway on Culver Road at the intersection with Rte 490 into the historic “Widewaters” area near Lake Riley.

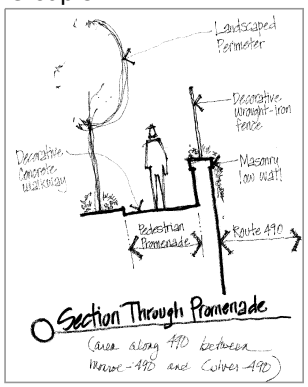
Group 3A



Monroe Avenue/Rte 490

This major gateway into the area could be improved by a number of changes, including a new bridge over the expressway, with pedestrian walkways as shown (cross-section below, left; top-view, right) and with other major aesthetic and pedestrian improvements such as better delineated crosswalks, new gateway signage and landscaping., and reconfiguration of certain properties to create a better-defined street-edge (above left).

Group 3A

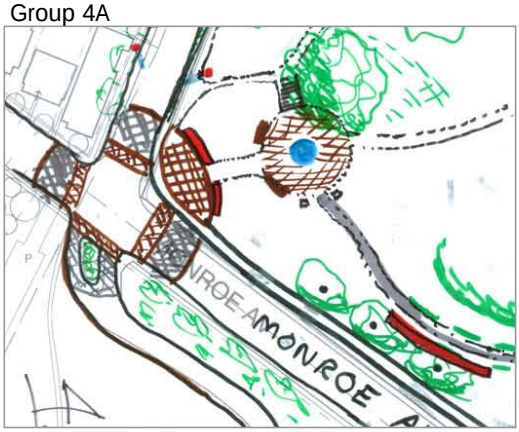


Group 3B

Charrette Results for Focus Area 4:

This focus area contains the Culver Road corridor from its T-intersection with Monroe Avenue to the bridge over Route 490, and also includes the contiguous Cobb's Hill Park areas. The goals for this focus group included exploring gateway possibilities into the park from the road, improving pedestrian access into the residential areas and along the corridor, and considering general strategies to increase local use of the park.

Group 4A



Enhanced Intersection and Park Entrance

Focus groups suggested possibilities for an enhanced entrance to Cobb's Hill Park at the Culver Road/Monroe Avenue intersection, such as the drawings shown here indicating a fountain at the entrance to the park (left) and an improved pathway system with new landscaping (below). They also indicate how the driveway to the Hillside Children's Center and Nursing Home could be re-routed to improve pedestrian mobility at the intersection.

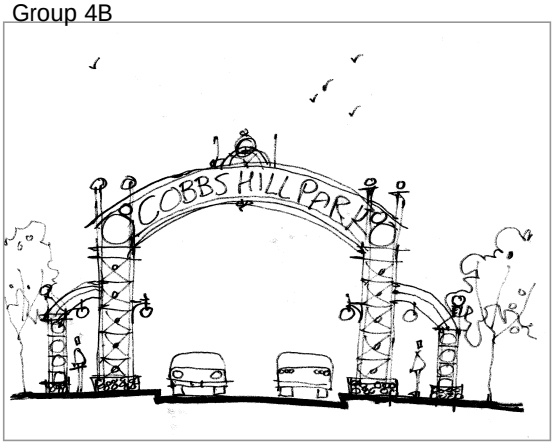
Group 4B

Group 4A

Improved Trail System

The figure at right shows Group 4A's suggestion for adding a trail around Lake Riley and for enhancing the Intersection of Culver Road and Hinsdale Street.

Group 4B



Gateway Sign

Group 4B suggests wrought iron welcoming gateway arches into Cobb's Hill Park, shown in this rendering.

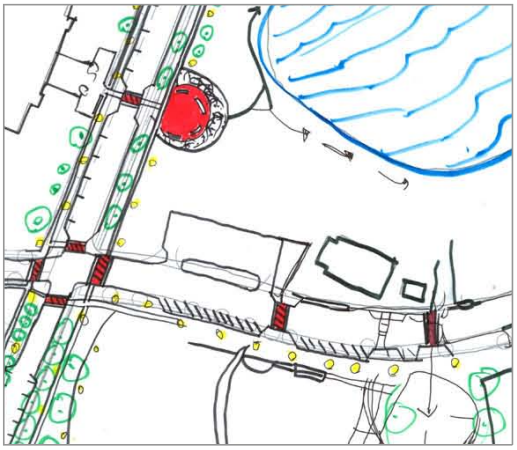
Culver Road Corridor and Cobb's Hill Park

Group 4A

Gathering Spaces in Park

The drawing at left shows suggestions for adding gathering spaces in Cobb's Hill Park, such as trellised pavilions or landscaped gazebos.

Group 4B



New Sidewalk

4B suggests moving Cobb's Hill sidewalk back from the street edge to create a more pleasant, meandering and well-lit path that roughly follows the road (right).

Better Parking

A suggestion for a parking area off of Norris Street with better defined spaces is shown at left..

Group 4B

Charrette Results for Focus Area 5:

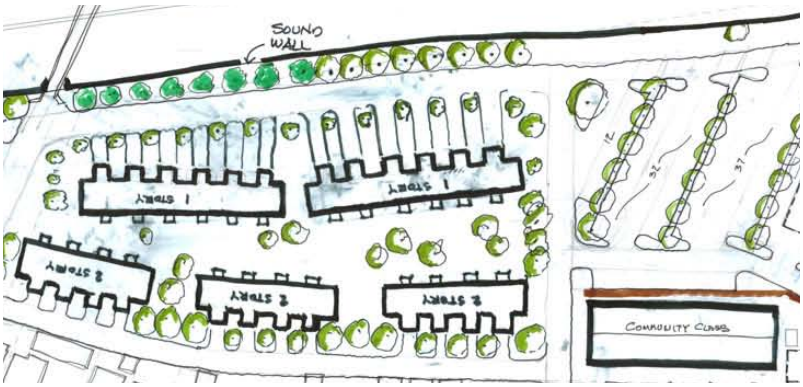
The Armory site includes the Culver Road Armory building complex, as well as the surrounding undeveloped green space between Route 490, Culver Road, and the nearby residential area. This group's major goals included considering possibilities for re-use of the Armory complex, creating connections between the area and the adjacent neighborhood and park, and planning for development which would be sensitive to the neighborhood context.

Group 5B

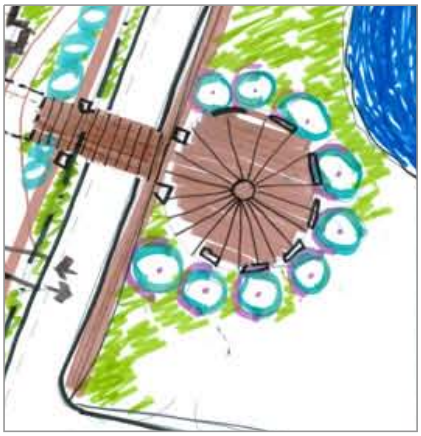
Mixed Residential and Green Space

The focus groups want to see mixed-use residential development in the currently undeveloped area behind the Armory building. Both groups suggested possibilities for maintaining and developing some of the green space on the Armory site.

Group 5A



Group 5B



Crosswalk

Group 5B shows how the front of the Armory building can be connected to the Cobb's Hill Park area by adding a well-defined crosswalk over Culver Road and adding a pavilion in the park.

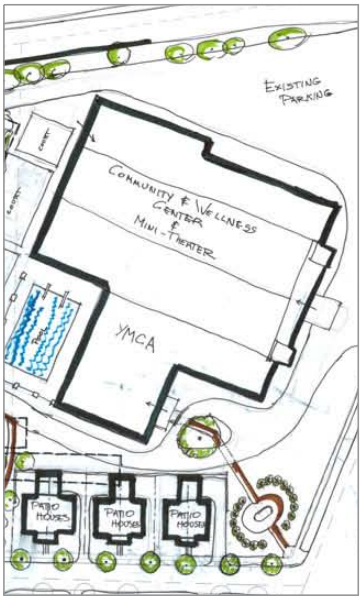
Armory Site

Group 5B

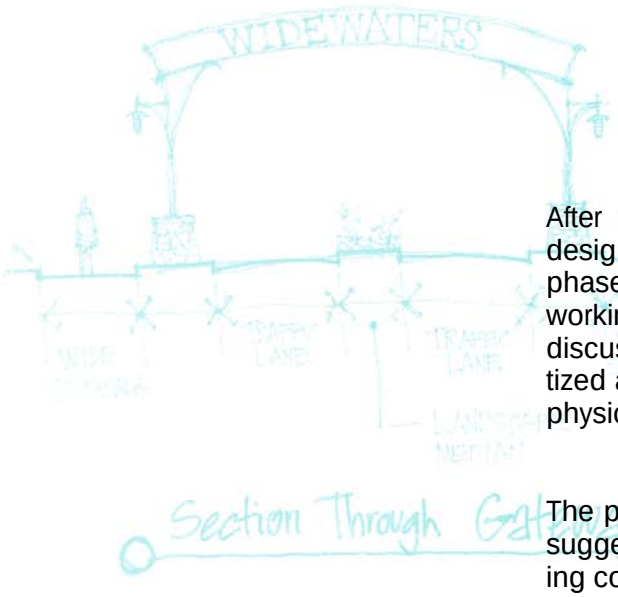
Community Space

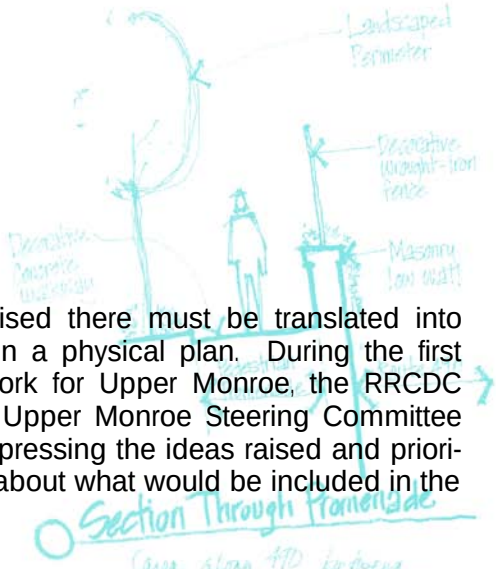
The two focus group made suggestions for appropriate, community-oriented adaptive reuse of the Armory building and existing outbuildings, such as a theater or community theater.

Group 5A



Post-Charrette Work
Phase I



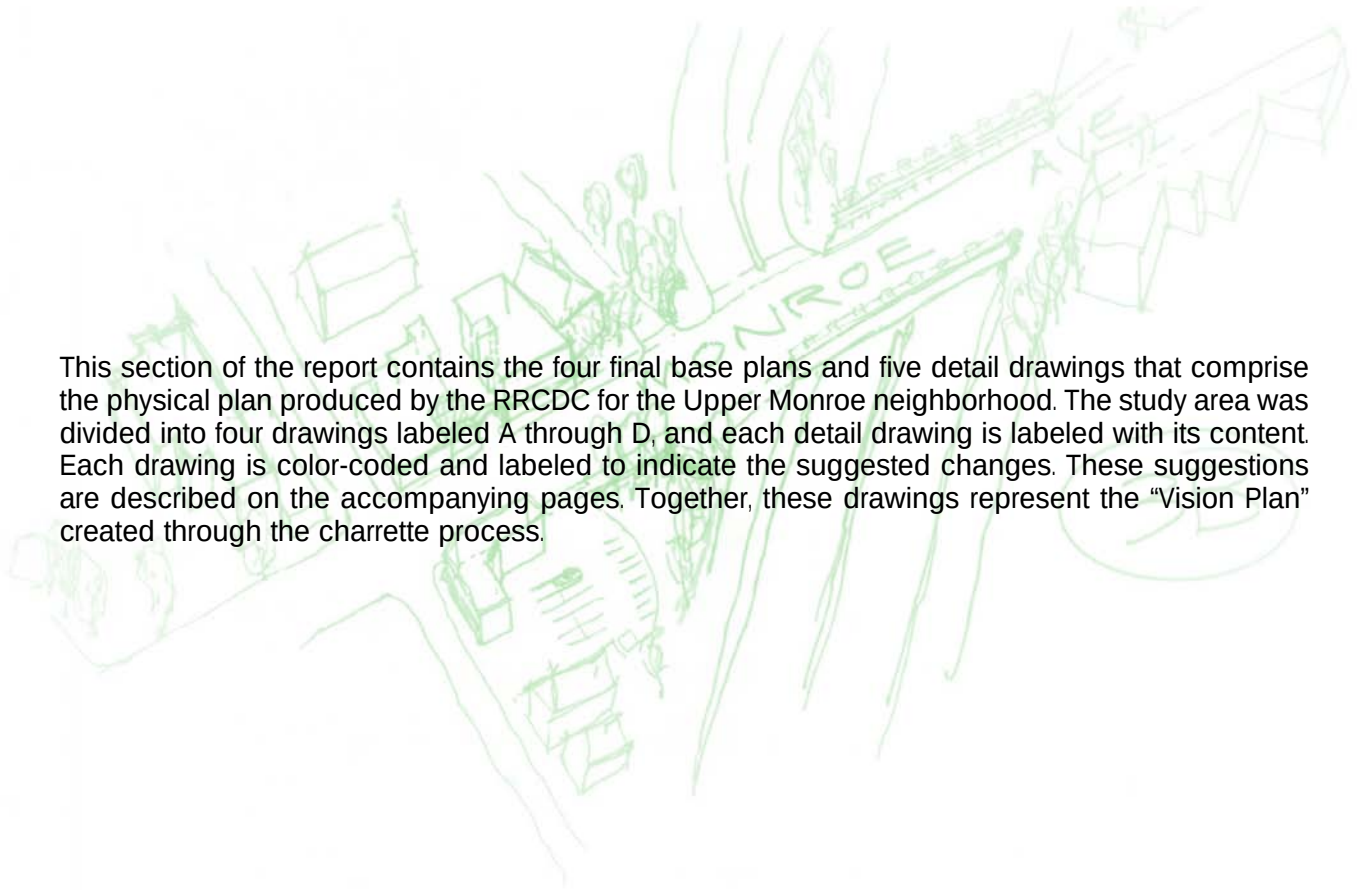


After a charrette, ideas raised there must be translated into design concepts shown on a physical plan. During the first phase of post-charrette work for Upper Monroe, the RRCDC working together with the Upper Monroe Steering Committee discussed strategies for expressing the ideas raised and prioritized and made decisions about what would be included in the physical plan.

The plan is created as an overlay drawing that shows the new, suggested features overlain on the physical base plan of existing conditions. Together with the recommendations for development laid out in the report, the physical plan provides a framework for the future development of the neighborhood.

A physical plan is important for a variety of reasons. It is drawn based on ideas generated at the charrette and is a documented record of those ideas and the recommendations made as the result. Working in the format of an overall plan ensures continuity and coordination, effectively tying together what is done in one area of the neighborhood with that in another in an overall strategy. The plan is a useful document that the neighborhood can employ when explaining strategies, seeking funding and encouraging investors and supporting development ideas. Having a plan available is valuable for the neighborhood to present to the City for issues that come up regarding planning and zoning. It serves as a planning tool and a map for short and long term project development and implementation.

Physical Plan for the Upper Monroe Neighborhood



This section of the report contains the four final base plans and five detail drawings that comprise the physical plan produced by the RRCDC for the Upper Monroe neighborhood. The study area was divided into four drawings labeled A through D, and each detail drawing is labeled with its content. Each drawing is color-coded and labeled to indicate the suggested changes. These suggestions are described on the accompanying pages. Together, these drawings represent the "Vision Plan" created through the charrette process.

Drawing A

Monroe Avenue from Route 490 to Avondale Park

This section covers the area of Monroe Corridor, beginning at the intersection of Monroe Avenue, Dartmouth Street and Canterbury Road just northwest of the bridge over the 490 expressway and extending to the intersection at Avondale Park. It shows the combined suggestions of focus groups that studied Monroe Corridor, the Urban Village, and Gateways for this area.

Neighborhood Identity – To address the neighborhood's desire for a cohesive theme that visually connects the area, the RRCDC has indicated in the final plan a number of community-based suggestions to improve the overall neighborhood aesthetic.

- Façade Improvements: The red lines that outline some buildings in part or full, such as the historic Crosman Seed Company building, Wilson Farms, and several commercial buildings, indicate areas for façade improvements. Suggested improvements include porch reconstruction, historically sensitive renovation, new window and awning treatments, and other appropriate façade alterations. See detail of commercial storefront with renovated facade.

- Uniform Sidewalk and Crosswalk Material: The yellow line indicates current or suggested location of sidewalks. New crosswalk treatments are indicated at appropriate intersections. The RRCDC and community suggest that crosswalks be made of a material such as brick, contrasting to the asphalt of the road along the length of the corridor.

- Decorative Landscaping and Public Art: The final plan suggests locations for improved landscaping and public art which will contribute to the overall visual quality of the neighborhood. Locations for additions along Monroe Avenue include decorative fencing at the intersection with Canterbury Road, landscaped "gateway" sculptures on both sides of the bridge over 490, gateway piers at the entrances to Suter Terrace and Crosman Terrace, and a landscaped pedestrian gathering space in front of the New Life Presbyterian Church.

- Screened Parking: Screened parking makes parking lots more attractive and helps separate pedestrians from car traffic. The physical plan indicates fenced or landscaped screening of parking lots at locations including Wilson Farms, the parking off of Engel Place, the historic Crosman Seed building, and the lot at the intersection with Rosedale Street.

Pedestrian Friendliness – All improvements to the neighborhood should improve conditions for pedestrians by making the area generally more pleasant to spend time in. Certain physical structures in the final plan will help to specifically increase pedestrian mobility and will also improve pedestrian safety.

- Enhanced and Additional Crosswalks: Major pedestrian crossings are suggested at intersections of Monroe with Canterbury Road, Laburnam Crescent, Shepard Street, and Rosedale Street. Minor crosswalk improvements are suggested at other crossings. As shown in the plan, crosswalks should be made of a contrasting material. Intersections should be raised slightly to discourage speeding vehicles.

- Pedestrian Refuge Islands: Extended or additional pedestrian refuge islands are suggested for a number of wide crossings near Route 490, including the on- and off-ramps to the expressway, as shown.

- Additional Bump-outs: "Bump-outs," areas where the curb extends into the parking lane, are effective for calming traffic and also decrease the distance that pedestrians must walk across roads. Larger or added bump-outs are suggested at two specific intersections as noted on the plan.

- Pedestrian-scale Lighting: Post-top, pedestrian-scale lighting should replace tall davit-style lighting.

- Enhancements to Bridge over Expressway: The Vision Plan calls for a new, signature bridge where Monroe Avenue crosses over Route 490, with wide pedestrian walkways, bollards, and decorative lighting, railings and piers.

Enhanced Green Space – There are two main goals for green space areas, including adding street trees and planters along the sidewalk to increase the foliage along the street, as well as making existing green space more inviting and usable for pedestrians, residents, and other visitors to the neighborhood.

- Street Trees: New locations for street trees are suggested along the entire length of the corridor. The benefits of street trees include their ability to create a canopy effect and help to define the pedestrian realm on the sidewalk, and their presence as "green" space helping to break the hardness of the concrete street and sidewalk.

- Existing Green Space: Certain areas are suggested for improvements to existing green space that will make the areas more inviting, including the lot in front of the New Life Presbyterian Church and one corner of the intersection of Monroe and Luzerne Street.

Historic Preservation – Certain historic buildings and locations in the area are pinpointed for historically sensitive renovations.

- Crosman Seed Company Building: Restoration of the building's historic façade and features are recommended in the final plan

- Crosman Terrace: Pylon gateway structures are suggested at the entrance to Crosman Terrace, the location of a number of historic houses.

Neighborhood Connections – Facilitating both car and pedestrian traffic from the Upper Monroe area to other neighborhoods was an important component of the new Vision Plan.

- Improved Bridge Conditions: In Drawing A, the major issue of connectivity is improving pedestrian flow over the 490 bridge. Suggested improvements to the bridge and the strong sidewalks and crosswalks leading to the bridge should help to improve mobility of pedestrians from Upper Monroe to the rest of the Monroe Avenue Corridor. See bridge detail.

Monroe Avenue from the New Life Presbyterian Church to Culver Road

Drawing B

This section covers the area of the Monroe Corridor, beginning at the New Life Presbyterian Church just northwest of the intersection of Monroe Avenue with Rosedale Street and extending to the intersection with Culver Road at Cobb's Hill Park. It shows the combined suggestions of focus groups that studied the Monroe Corridor, Culver Road, and Gateways for this area.

Neighborhood Identity

- Façade Improvements: Suggestions for improvements or reconstruction to facades are indicated by the red outline around certain buildings. In Section B, renovations are suggested for facades of buildings at the corners of Belmont Street, Culver Road, and at the Congregation Beth Shalom.

- Decorative Landscaping and Sculpture: A small, landscaped sculpture area is suggested at the corner of Monroe and Belmont Street, and decorative landscaping and fencing are suggested for the gateway at Culver Road and at the entrance to Werner Park.

- Street Tree Differentiation at Urban Village: Planting a smaller variety of street trees is suggested for the area within the "Urban Village" area where there is more concentrated commercial activity. Larger, denser street trees are suggested along the Monroe Corridor outside of the Urban Village.

- Screened Parking: The final plan shows landscaped screening of the parking lots near the entrance to the nursing home at Culver Road and at the corner of Rosedale Street and Monroe Avenue to improve the overall visual quality of the area.

Strong Gateways – Members of the community felt that entrances into the area should be distinctly marked with visual cues. Suggestions to improve gateways are shown in the final plan for all three major entrances into the area and for minor gateways within the charrette area.

- Intersection of Culver Road and Monroe Avenue: This major gateway can be highlighted with the addition of gateway piers, a circular, low wall and new plantings similar to those installed at the gateway by the bridge over the expressway. Enhancing the entrance to Cobb's Hill Park at this gateway will also contribute to the strong sense of a gateway.

- Entrance to Werner Park: The entrance to Werner Park is shown in the final plan with expanded green space and new gardens at the corners and at the end of the landscaped median to highlight the minor gateway.

Pedestrian Friendliness

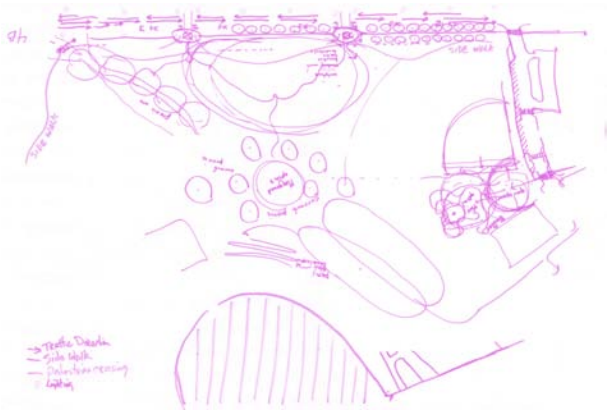
- Crosswalks and Raised Intersection at Gateway: The intersection of Culver and Monroe is improved for pedestrian mobility with raised crosswalks of a contrasting material and is highlighted with a contrasting material filling between the crosswalks.

- Reconfigured Driveways to the Hillside Children's Center and Nursing Home: The two driveways are combined, and the width of the single driveway is reduced to decrease the distance for pedestrians to cross.

Enhanced Green Space

- New Entrance to Cobb's Hill Park: The final plan indicates a more visually welcoming and distinctive entrance to Cobb's Hill Park, including a paved, circular entryway with decorative landscaping, sculpture and signage. The new entrance leads to pathways that meander into the park, inviting more visitors to use the existing green space of the park. The gateway and paths would also be enhanced by post-top light polls which are important for safety as well as visual quality.

- New Life Presbyterian Church: The green space in the lot in front of the Presbyterian Church is shown with a new paved walkway and landscaped gathering space. The space should be well lit and encourage visitors to utilize the space. See detail drawing of church.



Drawing C

Culver Road and Cobb's Hill Park from Monroe Avenue to Hinsdale Street

This section covers the area on either side of Culver Road, including a section of Cobb's Hill Park. It begins at the intersection of Culver Road and Monroe Avenue and extends to the intersection of Culver Road and Hinsdale Street. It includes suggestions for a section of Cobb's Hill Park along Culver Road, showing the combined suggestions of focus groups that studied the Monroe Avenue and Culver Road corridors for this area.

Neighborhood Identity – Cobb's Hill Park should be a distinctive and recognizable part of the overall "identity" for the Upper Monroe area.

- Focal Sculptures in Park: The final plan suggests locations along Culver Road for several landscaped focal sculptures and gardens, including the park entrance plaza at the Monroe/ Culver Gateway and other locations in the park

- Park Pavilions: Suggested locations for new pavilions are shown on the physical plan. The pavilions will provide gathering spaces for visitors to the park as well as contribute to the overall aesthetic quality of the park area. A sample pavilion is shown in a detailed drawing.

Pedestrian Friendliness

- Pedestrian-Scale Lighting: Areas for new, pedestrian-scale post-top light fixtures are suggested along Culver Road and throughout Cobb's Hill Park

- Relocated Sidewalk along Culver Road: The sidewalk through Cobb's Hill Park along Culver Road is moved back and meanders slightly in the physical plan. This helps to set pedestrians back from the street and contributes to a more park-like atmosphere for people using the sidewalk.

- New Crosswalks and Bump-outs: In addition to the pedestrian improvements at intersections, new bump-outs and raised crosswalks made of contrasting material such as brick or pavers are suggested at two locations along Culver Road to improve access to Cobb's Hill Park and to facilitate pedestrian mobility across Culver Road.

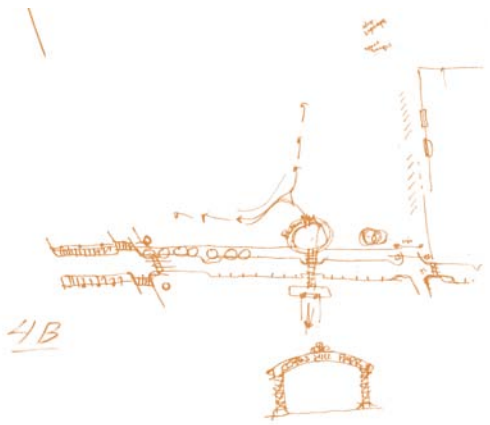
- Traffic Reduced to Two Lanes: Current traffic studies indicate that traffic could easily be reduced to only two lanes along this portion of Culver Road, which would discourage speeding and improve safety for pedestrians. The addition of bump-outs will help define the on-street parallel parking spaces added with the reduction of traffic lanes, as indicated on the physical plan.

Enhanced Green Space

- New Trail System in Park: The final plan shows a new paved and landscaped trail system through Cobb's Hill Park, to increase access for bicycles and pedestrians. The paths and walkways should be lit with post-top, pedestrian-scale lighting. The added paths through the park will help encourage use of the green space by visitors.

- Improved Parking on Norris Road: The final plan calls for well-defined and better-organized parking areas along Norris Road for park visitors.

- New Trees along Street and throughout Cobb's Hill Park: The plan notes areas for new trees to be planted both in the park and along Culver Road.



The Armory Site and Culver Road from Hinsdale Street to Route 490

Drawing D

This section covers the area of Culver Road from the Hinsdale Street intersection to the bridge over Route 490. It includes suggestions for the area of Cobb's Hill Park around Lake Riley as well as suggested development for the current Armory site. This section of the plan shows the combined suggestions of focus groups that studied the Culver Road corridor, Gateways and the Armory Site.

Neighborhood Connections

- New Pedestrian Bridge over Route 490: The plan calls for a new pedestrian bridge over Route 490 that will connect from the proposed extension of Rosedale Street to the Park Avenue neighborhood on Canterbury Road near Berkeley Street.

- New Signature Bridge over Route 490: The proposed new bridge where Culver Road crosses the expressway will have wider and better-defined sidewalks and pedestrian-scale lighting to facilitate pedestrian mobility along Culver Road.

- New Trail System: A new trail system is proposed that would follow the perimeter of Lake Riley and connect to the new paths in Cobb's Hill Park, to increase access to the park and lake. The trail around the lake will have access from the sidewalk along the east side of Culver Road and will connect to the north through the Armory site, following Route 490 and eventually meet with sidewalks in the proposed neighborhood, with a connection to Overdale Street.

New Development on Armory Site – Proposed development for the existing Armory site includes development that will facilitate reuse of some of the Armory buildings as well as plans for new residential development that will also preserve and enhance green space. As indicated in the final plan, the proposed development for the site includes mixed residential housing with single-family homes and townhouse-style residences, new roads including carriage service lanes for rear-entrance to residences, developed green spaces, and new parking areas for use by the neighborhood, New Life Presbyterian Church, and other neighborhood visitors.

Historic Preservation

- Adaptive Reuse of Armory Building: Many aspects of the final plan are oriented around a community-based adaptive reuse of the existing Armory building and the Armory outbuildings.

- Relocation of Monument: The existing historic monument near Lake Riley can be relocated to align with the entrance to the Armory building to improve the visual, symbolic and physical connections between the structures on either side of Culver.

Gateways

- Major Gateway at Culver Road and Route 490: A new signature bridge similar in style to the bridge proposed for the Monroe Avenue expressway crossing is suggested for the Culver Road bridge over Route 490. The gateway into the neighborhood can be enhanced with markers, landscaping and a low, circular entry wall at the south end of the new bridge.

- Minor Gateways: Markers for minor gateways are suggested at the entrance to Werner Park off Hinsdale Street, and off Rosedale Street into the proposed residential development on the existing Armory site.

Pedestrian Friendliness

- Additional Crosswalks: New, well-defined crosswalks, some with bump-outs, are proposed along Culver Road at the intersection with Hinsdale Street and at the south end of the bridge over Route 490, and on Hinsdale Street at the intersections with Belmont Street, Rosedale Street and Werner Park. New crosswalks are also proposed within the new development on the Armory site, as shown in the plan.
- Landscaped Crosswalk at Armory: A landscaped path across Culver Road with crosswalk and a landscaped pedestrian refuge island is proposed to connect the entrance to the Armory building with Cobb's Hill Park.

Green Space

- Enhancements in Cobb's Hill Park: The plan shows a number of improvements to increase the aesthetics and accessibility of Cobb's Hill Park. These suggestions include a new terrace and covered porch for the existing Recreational Center near Lake Riley, paths that connect to new piers in Lake Riley, the new trail system, increased landscaping, and the addition of a well-defined parking area off Norris Street.

- Developed Green Space on Armory Site: Green space can be developed in a number of locations on the current Armory site, including creation of a small park near the proposed footbridge off Palisade Park, a landscaped lawn area and new pavilion at the end of the proposed extension of Belmont Street, a landscaped mall with focal sculpture along proposed residential street, and a number of new street trees in locations shown on the plan.

Recommendations for Implementation Phase

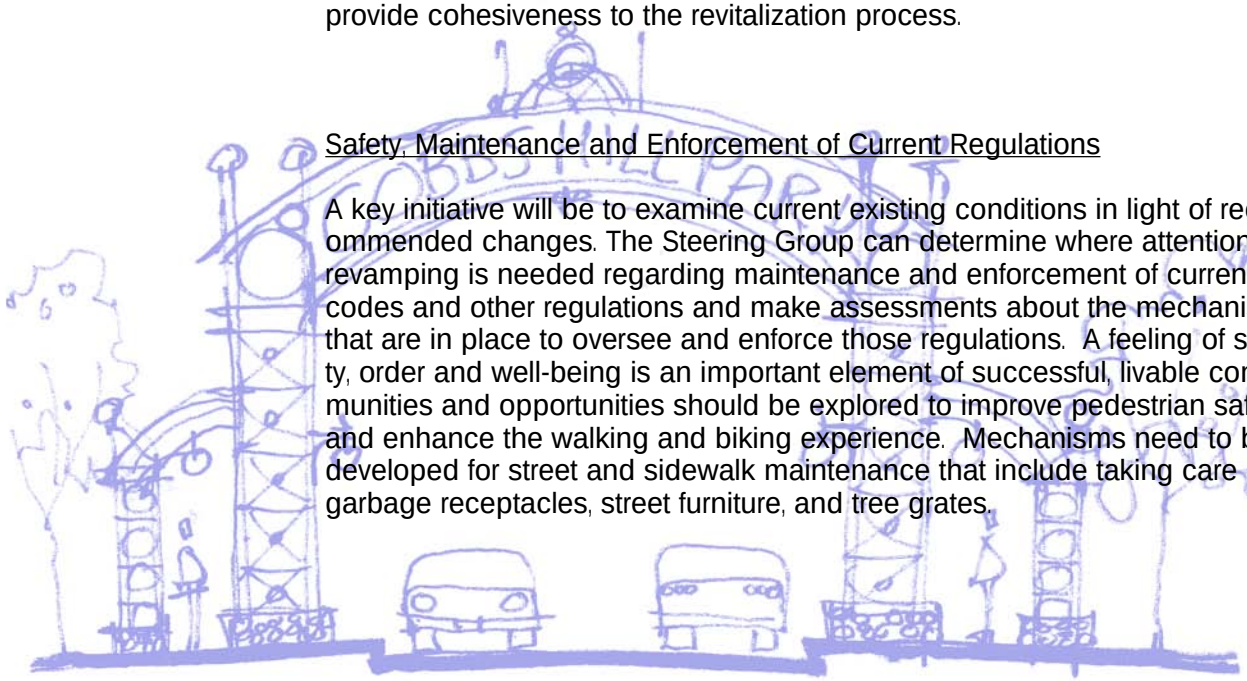
The Upper Monroe Vision Plan features a multitude of ideas for future plans and development in the Upper Monroe Neighborhood. Future initiatives will be carried out in the Implementation Phase and will need to involve public, private and public-private effort and funding. One of the first tasks should be to organize and classify the ideas into groupings under the categories of projects, programs and initiatives and then to prioritize them. The second step would be to identify the process necessary to achieve the desired goal and then to earmark the groups, agencies and individuals needed to bring the goals to fruition.

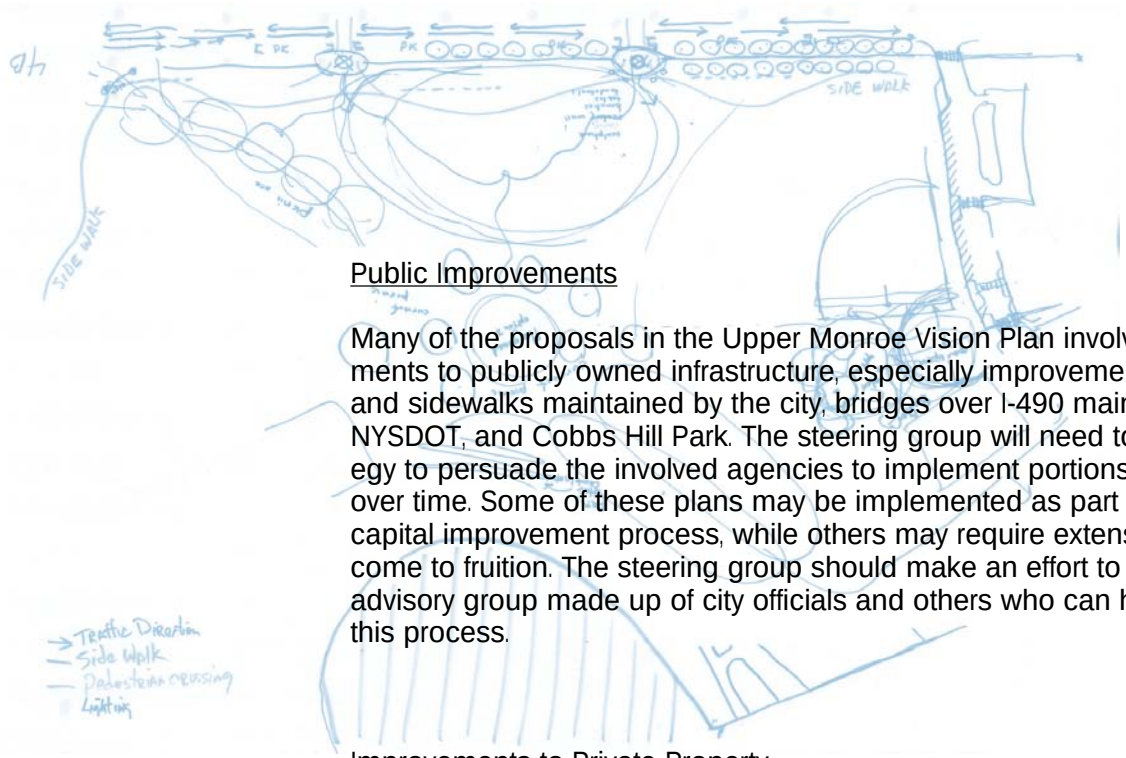
Steering Group

During the Charrette and Post Charrette Phase I planning process, a Steering Committee helped to coordinate activities, coordination between the various groups and individuals involved, communicate and provide input. The RRCDC recommends that a similar group, comprised of interested citizens, groups and organizations, be formed to guide the strategic planning, development activities, and program and initiative efforts during the Implementation Phase. This is a group that will oversee, review, make decisions and provide cohesiveness to the revitalization process.

Safety, Maintenance and Enforcement of Current Regulations

A key initiative will be to examine current existing conditions in light of recommended changes. The Steering Group can determine where attention or revamping is needed regarding maintenance and enforcement of current codes and other regulations and make assessments about the mechanisms that are in place to oversee and enforce those regulations. A feeling of safety, order and well-being is an important element of successful, livable communities and opportunities should be explored to improve pedestrian safety and enhance the walking and biking experience. Mechanisms need to be developed for street and sidewalk maintenance that include taking care of garbage receptacles, street furniture, and tree grates.





Public Improvements

Many of the proposals in the Upper Monroe Vision Plan involve improvements to publicly owned infrastructure, especially improvements to streets and sidewalks maintained by the city, bridges over I-490 maintained by the NYSDOT, and Cobbs Hill Park. The steering group will need to devise a strategy to persuade the involved agencies to implement portions of the plan over time. Some of these plans may be implemented as part of the normal capital improvement process, while others may require extensive lobbying to come to fruition. The steering group should make an effort to assemble an advisory group made up of city officials and others who can help kickstart this process.

Improvements to Private Property

New development, renovation, and restoration should follow some general design principles in order to preserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the Upper Monroe Neighborhood and its public realm. The City of Rochester Zoning Code contains provisions for the establishment of Neighborhood Design Guidelines. These guidelines would exist outside of the Zoning Code as a manual or handbook. The guidelines would not be mandatory rules, but would provide further guidance to the review authority in evaluating development plans. The guidelines would supplement the City-Wide Design Guidelines and Standards already in effect. The RRCDC is able to provide technical assistance for the development of such Guidelines.

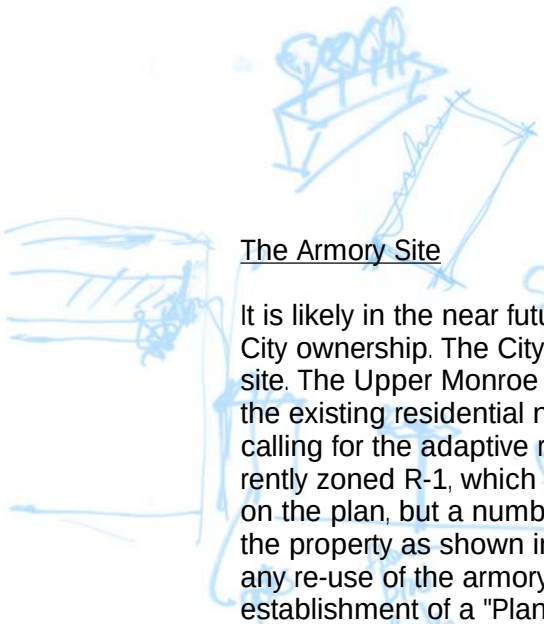
Design Guidelines should assure architectural and visual harmony between buildings while allowing for creativity and individuality. They may address:

Building orientation, materials, massing and height;

Signage, awnings, lighting and other appurtanances;

Landscaping of both decorative and usable green spaces.

The Zoning Code has reduced the requirements for off-street parking to more realistic and reasonable levels. It also now includes parking maximums and encourages shared parking solutions in an effort to minimize the unecessary and destructive paving of our neighborhoods. The steering group should work with propertry owners to develop parking strategies that include street and small lot solutions and shared parking behind buildings in organized configurations.

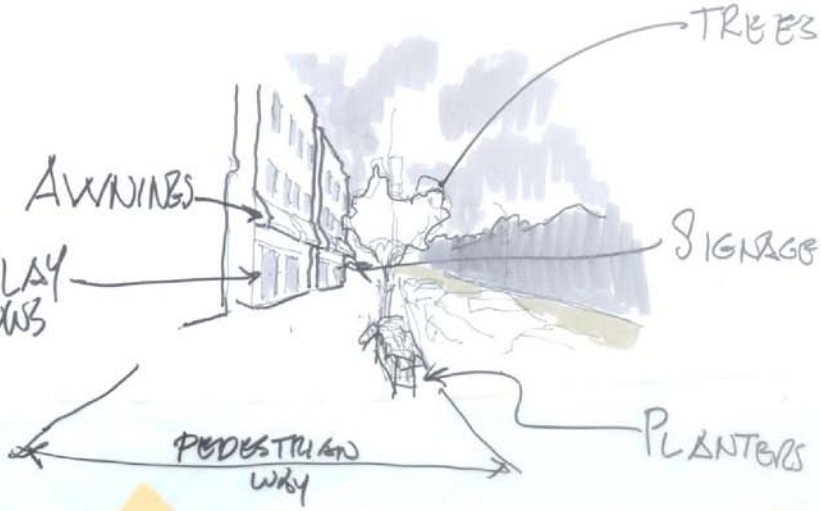


The Armory Site

It is likely in the near future that the Culver Road Armory will be transferred to City ownership. The City, in turn, will almost certainly seek a developer for the site. The Upper Monroe Vision Plan contains a proposal for an extension of the existing residential neighborhood to this largely vacant site, as well as calling for the adaptive re-use of the armory buildings. Most of the site is currently zoned R-1, which allows for the detached and attached houses shown on the plan, but a number of variances would likely be required to develop the property as shown in the plan. A zoning change would be required for any re-use of the armory buildings. The Zoning Code has a provision for the establishment of a "Planned development District." In a Planned Development District, rules specific to that district are created, in essence the district has its own zoning code. This is an opportunity to establish a true Form-Based Code that would ensure that improvements, new development and renovations will be designed with attention to uses and aesthetics that are an enhancement to the area's urban tradition and contribute in a positive way to the overall built environment in the neighborhood. The code could include standards related to architecture, public infrastructure, and land use. The overall goal is to strengthen the quality of the public realm and to encourage good design parameters for development both private and public. The RRCDC is able to provide technical assistance for the development of such a Form-Based Code, although a consultant will be needed to draft the code in such a way that it can be legally adopted. The steering group should work closely with city officials to have a Form-Based Code adopted for this site before a request for proposals is issued, so that potential developers will submit proposals based on the Vision Plan developed by the neighbors at the Upper Monroe Charrette.

ELEMENTS

- SMALLER SCALE



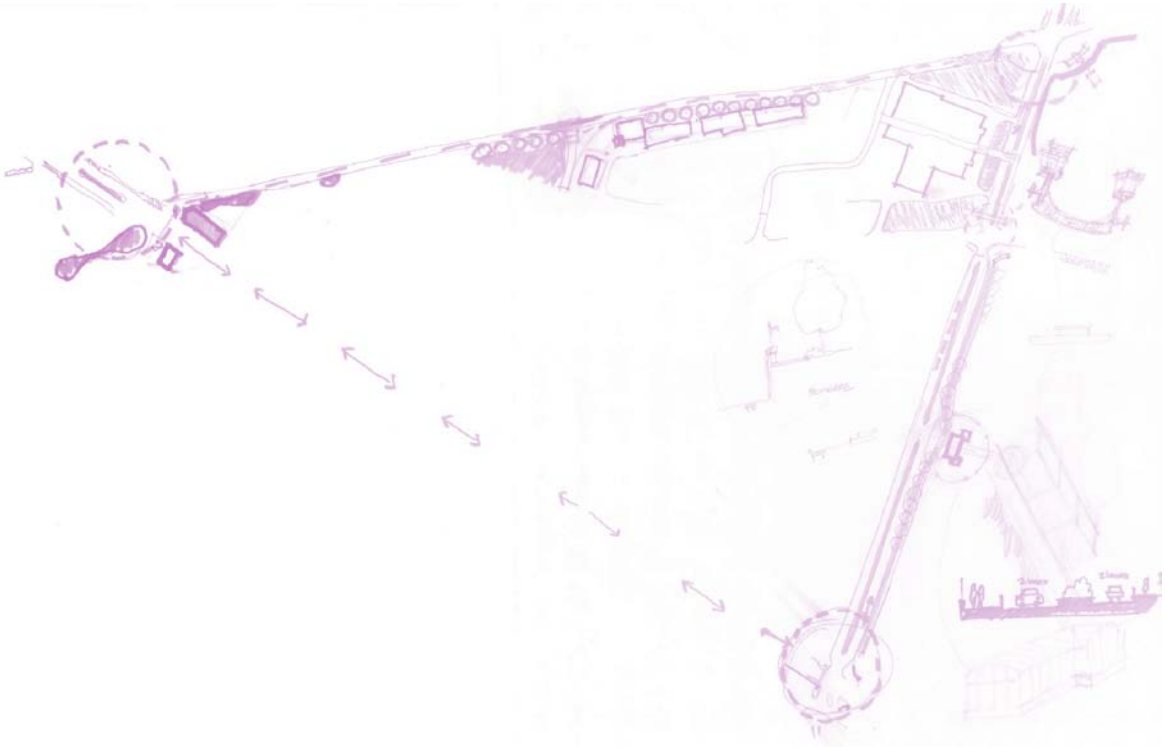
WROUGHT-IRON AMENTITIES

THEME:

ORGANIC GROWTH
"ART NOUVEAU"
COLOR

GROUP 2

Summary and Conclusions



The drawings and ideas presented in this report are products of a process that has been underway for over one and a half years. Planning, carrying out, and following-up the charrette have been a worthy process helping community members take steps towards setting and achieving goals for the Upper Monroe Neighborhood. The physical plans provided here represent a vision for the neighborhood that must be followed up with action during the upcoming implementation phase in order to become reality. The physical plans and written recommendations in this report will provide the Upper Monroe community members with a concrete record of the ideas they developed at the charrette, and will provide a guide to follow as they proceed with revitalization efforts.The next steps taken by the community will be an exciting, but perhaps even more difficult, part of the development process.

The charrette and post-charrette processes described in the previous pages will serve not only as a guide for development of the Upper Monroe Neighborhood, but will also serve as a model for other communities seeking to revitalize. Communities of many types can follow this basic model of engaging citizens, forging new community relationships, exploring the physical and social aspects of the area, and working together to develop consensus for a Community-Based Vision Plan. Communities that engage in the charrette process will often discover that simply engaging in this planning method will lead to the emergence of many unexpected yet welcome long-term effects.

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